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### Dance Senior Thesis

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Rashanna Renee Dennis

Dance Major

Loyola Marymount University

2004

Table

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Summary of Classes



# *Senior Thesis*

## *Dance Team Instructor in Secondary Education*

### Introduction

I am a dance instructor today, because dance defines my purpose and satisfies my life. When I was a little girl, the sound of music somehow brought joy to me, bursting from my feet, making it impossible to be still. I have been dancing from middle school all the way to today. I still cannot be still. Many people ask why? And my answer is simply to dance is to be human. Dance not only brings joy to me, but it also emerges from me because dancing gives many other people that same joy I experience. In this thesis paper I want to share my experience in becoming a Dance Team Instructor in a High School: Gardena.

I have learned from my experience, in assuming the role of a dance team instructor in a secondary educational setting, teachers must first learn how to apply dance to students' needs. A teacher must identify what dance means to him or her, and how it can become meaningful to students. Once this meaning is established, the teacher must receive all necessary credentials to qualify for the dance team instructor position.



To become a dance team instructor one has to take many steps in preparation for the position, starting with receiving an appropriate credential. To be a dance instructor one has to first gain sufficient knowledge of dance internally and externally, evaluating the fundamentals of dance as well developing an aesthetic of dance. This will allow the teacher to learn the variations of what dance can be and establish diversity of dance and its many purposes. Once teachers have dissected and analyzed dance, they should earn a dance degree, and a teaching license or credential. In this official manner, the dance qualifications have now been met and achieved. Now the next step is taking dance to a specific school.

After completing undergraduate training, to qualify as a teacher, the California Board of Education requires all potential teachers to take more steps to become a teacher. The first requirement is for all potential teachers to take the California Basic Educational Skill Test, (CBEST) (<http://lauds/k12.com>). This test is designed to analyze a person's knowledge in Reading, English and Math, basically to make sure he or she has some basic knowledge. The Board requires all potential teachers to earn a passing score, which eventually allows them to start teaching with a temporary credential, which some people call an emergency credential (<http://cde.ca.gov.com>). The emergency credential helps many future teachers, because it allows teachers to get a jump-start on teaching and receive a salary and benefits (<http://lauds/k12.com>). But this emergency credential could become a problem



because some teachers get comfortable with it and never pursue a fulltime certified credential program, which is required by the California State Board. The emergency credential is now only available for a year or two depending on the local district or school. Why? Because the California State Board of Education wants to make sure that all teachers receive all necessary tools and resources to become a successful teacher (<http://cde.ca.gov>). Many teachers who do not complete the credential process will not be able to teach for a long time. They will have to go back to school to receive the credential. But, this will never happen to me.

After a potential teacher receives an emergency credential, he or she then applies to a school district of choice or gets a placement in any school district in California: LAUSD, CUSD, PVSD, and TSD any district ( <http://Cde.ca.gov>). In finding a district the teacher also looks for a position that suits his or her career such as, a Physical Education teacher, aerobic teacher, modern dance teacher, auxiliary coordinator/band, or cheerleader sponsor. Once this position is established, the teacher then notifies a specific chairperson from that district (<http://lausd/k12.com>). For example, if the choice is to be modern dance teacher, he or she should notify the district performance or dance specialist, or if aerobic teacher, the teacher should notify the physical education chairperson. Once the candidate meets all qualifications of becoming a Dance Team instructor in Secondary Education, the



next step is learning the responsibilities in teaching the dance teams, disciplining, organizing, directing, and maintaining the spirit program.

### Administrative Responsibilities

The responsibilities in teaching dance are first, teachers must establish a head roster for all students who are enrolled or who try-out for a specific team. This can consist of fifteen to fifty girls (if an auxiliary coordinator). After receiving the head roster, teachers must do a grade check for eligibility status. All secondary schools have requirements for students who are interested in participating in extra-curricular activities. They must have a 2.0 grade point average (GHS, 2004). This is to enforce the importance of education and the privilege to be in extra-curricular activities.

After checking grades and establishing all who are eligible, teachers make team contracts for the team members. A team contract is a list of regulations that each team member must abide by throughout the year. Contract example: I, a pantherette, must maintain a 2.0 g.p.a in order to stay active on the team. I, a tall flag member, must pay my dues by Friday of each week. If I shall fail to do so, I will accumulate a dollar fine to my dues. I, a drill team member, must notify my captains if I shall be late to practice. If I fail to, I understand that I have to do twenty-five jumping jacks times the minutes I am late.



Once contracts are distributed and clarified, all members must take contracts home and on the next day, return contracts to the teacher with parent signatures. Students who fail to turn in their contracts cannot participate in any activities until they do so. Teachers must make sure that the parents of the team members understand the requirements and expectations of the squad. Parent signatures verify that at least one parent has read and agrees to the standards and terms for their children to be on the squad. If the child ever is in violation of their contract, the parents will understand why.

After contracts are distributed, signed, and filed the next step is for teachers to submit a copy of the head roster to all school counselors for proper enrollment. Proper enrollment for all dance team members is to enroll in sixth period marching band (GHS, 2004). Sixth period is designed for rehearsal for performances of any event. This time period allows students to rehearse during school hours just in case they cannot stay for after- school to practice. Practice consists of five hours, two hours during sixth period and three hours after school.

In any extra curricular activity, students can receive Physical Education credit, because these activities involve physical activity such as softball, tennis, dance team, cheer, song, flags, basketball, or football (<http://lauds/k12.com>). A lot of students like that choice, because they have more fun in these activities than in Physical Education—and they do not like to wear the P.E clothes.



After all students are properly enrolled in sixth period, it is time to get to know everyone's physical status. Teachers notify the school athletic department and receive a packet that students need to fill out regarding their health. The packets contain: a clearance by a doctor with a physical exam (filled out by the doctor), verification of health insurance, health risk forms (allergies, asthma, minor headaches etc), code of conduct form, parents release forms, and emergency health cards (GHS, 2004). All of these must be completed and filled out before any student participates. This health check allows the school to verify the student's health and to give permission for the activity (<http://lauds/k12.com>). After everyone is cleared it is now time to work towards the season.

### Planning

As an auxiliary coordinator of the dance teams, I work very closely with the band director. The band director is responsible for all music which accompanies my dance team during the football season. I and the band director sit down and discuss what music we will use during the upcoming year. In this process we decide on a theme for each show, music, costumes and props. For instance Aladdin was a theme: we used the soundtrack from the movie; the costumes were in colors such as purple, gold, red, yellow, fuchsia; we needed Egyptian props such as: gold fans, gold flags, and scarves, ribbons. All these features go into developing a show theme.



After we establish this theme, I then prepare the uniforms and costumes. Why? If costumes cost a lot of money, then the team must engage in fundraising. That process takes a few months for all costumes to be made by a certain time. After I have picked the uniforms and costumes (uniforms are for spirit days before performances, costumes are for the performances) I then arrange meetings with the teams to give them payment and fundraising dates. After I take care all of these miscellaneous items, it is now time to work on choreography for halftime shows.

The band director provides four different songs for the season. I then make copies of the music and distribute them to the dancers. Before I begin to choreograph, I first play the music for them, so they can have an idea of what the music is and how it makes them feel. After introducing the music I then gather all the captains of each auxiliary team and give instructions on practicing with music. I also give them my expectations. Each captain of each auxiliary team is responsible for making sure all dance members learn the choreography in a timely manner. They are responsible to make sure that everyone is at practice and is practicing. After I present their duties, all captains then gather the dancers to stretch and warm-up. After warm-up all members then go to the football stadium to practice for the show.

### Choreography

In choreographing for a auxiliary unit, the parts of the choreography must be split up. In the tall and short flag units, the routines involve flags (which I really do



not do well, but have a sense of the style of dance), so I hire a tall flag specialist to choreograph routines (with tall flag captains) for the shows. During the choreographic process, I may sneak in and out to assist if need be. When the routine is done and I approve, I then put them into the field formation for the show.

While the tall flags specialist and captain take care of their routines, I choreograph for drill team and the Pantherettes, the other auxillary units. Drill team is a dance team that does percussive movements with a military style, with a little of jazz dance flavor. I use a lot of arm movements in unison and kick lines and have them maneuver props such as batons, scarves, ribbon sticks, or umbrellas, sequin sticks, or hoola hoops.

The Pantherettes are a southern jazz dance team that dances with a lot of quick movements. The Pantherettes are considered the show girls of the band. They initiate each performance, so they make an entrance every time they get ready to perform. In choreographing for the Pantherettes, I first make sure that all members develop an awareness of their bodies, gaining a sense of their ability to do the movements. I make sure the girls learn many different types of home stretching as well practice stretching so their muscles can feel relaxed during their movements (Cochran, 2001:p16). This is very important for the Pantherettes because their routines are designed to be very quick and sharp. When they step out, all attention



is on them and only them. I am an alumni Pantherette and I know how they should perform and represent themselves.

I need to coordinate tall flags with the specialist and direct the drill team and the Pantherettes. How do I manage all of this? It requires time management skills and the ability to multi-task. The trick I use is, I start one part of choreography with drill-team and then allow them to explore that specific part. While they are exploring I then go to the Pantherettes and give them their choreography, and when they explore I make my way back to drill team (Kanaja, 2003:p4). This is what a year of practicing consists of. It takes a lot of work and a lot of patience. I use this choreographic process for four different songs, which are from three to five minutes long. That is a lot of choreography!

### Practice Sessions

Once all auxillary members and band members are in the stadium, I begin to design the formation for the show. A formation for a show may consist of any shape or design such as, a triangle, a circle, a word, abbreviations like G.H.S., a face-- anything which is unique. After the formation is setup, it is now time to fill it in. This is the most critical part. As an auxiliary dance coordinator, I have to fill in the formation with all the auxiliary members, Pantherettes, Drill-team, Tall flags and Short flags and band members—everyone has to have a spot (Kanaja,2003:p4). This is a choreographic process that may involve from 30 to 60 members. This



process requires a lot of patience. After I put everyone into a position, I then make everybody exit the field and march back onto the field into the formation to see if they can reset the formation on their own. This process takes a week of daily practice for students to remember. Once I establish this formation, the teams then divide on the field to go over their individual team choreography. While the auxiliary teams are rehearsing the choreography, the band is practicing music for the show (Schlaich/Du Pont, 1989). This is what football season practices consist of: four hours of directing and choreographing everyday. Of course, after football seasons, there are then individual team competitions and social events that require less people but the same amount of time for practice. Fewer team members attend because they work second semester (seniors mostly) or catch up on college preparation classes.

### Discipline

In teaching dance for a band auxiliary unit during football and non-football seasons, teachers must enforce discipline at all times to keep the program running efficiently. Discipline is the key factor to any organization. Why? Discipline helps students build character and personal growth, and helps them to understand the meaning of responsibility as a team member. They must also be responsible as individuals. Disciplining my dance teams reinforces the understanding of my rules and regulations for the team and my expectations for their behavior (Wheelan, 2003). I do this to make them understand that, in life, each person has to abide by rules and



regulations, just like the laws of the government. The students either abide by them or take the consequences. I do not like to discipline students, but sometimes I understand that I have to, to set examples to other team members. I do not reward or tolerate bad behavior of defiant students (Wheelan, 2003). A hostile environment can make a teacher's job more difficult and less meaningful, affecting other students who want to dance and participate. My first step for handling defiant students is just to notify parents, work on a resolution, and try to remove the problem. For example, if a student is late to practice, that student must do twenty-five jumping jacks times the minutes late. If a student is absent from practice twice a week, that student cannot perform in that Friday game. If a student does not get dressed consecutively in one week for practice, that student will not perform in the pep-rally at lunch or the pre-game show. All are in violation of the contract. If a student displays a negative attitude towards the administration or a teacher at the time of instruction or in leisure time, she will be suspended from a game and team for that week, until a parent conference.

#### Working in the school

From this experience I can say that being a dance instructor is not always jolly, but that is life. Yes, being a dance instructor takes organization, discipline, teaching, but it also requires working with a good administration (Lumsden, 2003:p4). Officials in School Administration are the people who make sure the



school is being run properly and efficiently (Wheelan,2003). They keep track of students' attendance, monitor grade progress, and keep a safe campus. When administration officials neglect these areas, the results can affect the whole school. When a principal cancels a lunch time pep-rally for a Friday football game, because of a dispute with a coach or the band director, this decision upsets the students. For example, if the band director fails to show up to a conference meeting with administration officials, the principal will cancel a band performance because of his behavior (Lumsden, 2003). That's not fair to the students, who practice all week for the show. I strongly believe that to keep a peaceful campus, students need activities designed to keep students spirits up. It takes school spirit and pride to build a good school and it takes a principal with a good spirit and heart to build and sustain it.

### Summary

From my experience as a dance instructor, I have learned my duty is to provide all elements of the dance experience. I want my students to understand what dance is, how it makes them feel, and, of course, to have fun. When ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders learn dance, they gain the opportunity to do something positive and not negative. Dance allows students to learn in a community that exists in their school. It keeps students from the problems with the streets, drugs, sex, and gangs. This is why I do what I do. I do this to reach out to



students, to educate them, to enable them to express through dance, what hurts them. They can also express what makes them happy, and can have fun. Yes, I teach dance, but I always say that education is first and dance is second.

In this experience I knew first I had to establish my purpose in life then define it with a career and goal. I am a teacher that cares about my students; I am a teacher who wants a connection with my students. Having a connection allows my students not to be afraid to come to me when they are going through their ups and downs (Lumsden,2003). Having a connection to me builds trust between me and my students, especially when they cannot go home and talk to their parents about their grade in a class. For example, I had a student who would always tell me about her math class and why she was failing it. Her mother never knew she was struggling in the class, until I brought it to her attention. If her daughter does not pass the class, her grade point average will be affected, resulting in probation from the squad. I want to be available when students really need help on that math or English test. This is what teachers should be and do---help. I have written this thesis, to share with others and introduce to unknown people, that I love what I do, and am proud to do it because my job is to teach dance and be a helper. This is my calling.



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## My Aesthetic

*Throughout my exploration of this course (styles and forms), I have discovered knowledge of my aesthetic by analyzing many different concepts such as awareness, attention, action, creativity, improvisations, choreographic devices and Laban Movements. From exploring in all, revealed the significance of dance and its meaning of dance, where as any concept of dance can have meaning to dance only if you find it meaningful to you. From learning the use of different elements and concepts of dance, all had an impact to me. It's influence allowed me to evaluate what was useful and non-useful, meaning what I like versus what I don't like. This helped me established my aesthetic-Hip/Hop and Jazz, which I pronounce combine together, Hipswaje (hip-swa-jay), (hip/hop with a swing of jazz). I established my aesthetic by revealing the elements I found useful-EFFORT- weight and time and ELEMENT of energy and space. In Hip/Hop and Jazz the use of efforts is the number one element to use. Having a lot of energy is my power to achieve Hip/ Hop and Jazz movement, because Hip/Hop and Jazz, is a style that consist of many changes in effort, where movements can be very quick in time, where as movement can go on and on (break dancing), the movements can have rapid contractions (pop-locking) or bound movements that are sustained (the matrix). So effort is the key because Hip/Hop and Jazz is never just one style, it's not just one type of element or effort, all can be in use at one time.*



*My aesthetic Hip/ Hop and Jazz, shows who I am. It shows my personality, culture (African American), religion, morals, values and experiences. It gives an description of my character it revealing my beauty, emotion, sex-appeal and body and mind. It's from my characteristics that I choose to express through the art of dance. Establishing a connection to the style (hip/hop and jazz/) and letting all feeling and emotion speak from the body. This is why Hip/Hop and Jazz is my aesthetic. Hip/Hop gives me energy because of the battles many African American were faced with, Jazz makes me feel sexy, because we were so ignore for so long. It is Hip Hop and Jazz that make me feel, competitive, wanted and appreciated. From history, Hip/Hop and Jazz was rooted during the years of slavery and racism, where music and dance was the only way to be heard. From many prejudice acts from politics and upper class, to speak was useless, so what did we do? We use dance and music to be heard. This is why my aesthetic is so significant. It gives me the freedom to express, what I can't say. To be happily in love, make me want to dance sexy and exotic (high energy), to be sad of loosing a friend makes me dance free flow and sustained (little effort). To tell a story is my purpose of dance. Hip/Hop and Jazz dance will is my pencil to write my story.*

*In my final personal aesthetic study, I selected music from Janet Jackson- all for you. Whereas, it's a song about, I only want you and know body else, give me you and only you, don't try to be anybody else but yourself, basically loving yourself as you are. I selected this song, not because of the content, because of the effect of the music. When*



*listening to the music, the base of the beat, made me want to move, so I did. It's from that I started to dance Hip/Hop. When her lyrics came in ( all my girls in the party shaking that body) I switch to jazz all a sudden, (again painting on sex-appeal) to give appreciated to myself as a women, so what better way to do this by rolling the pelvis. So, with Jazz and Hip/Hop being my aesthetic, I used both (not choreographing to words) to tell a story- showing appreciation of self. So in conclusion of my aesthetic my movements consist of Laban Efforts- bound flow and time, and Laban Element- space and energy, doing very quick and sharp movements of the arms, very fast switching of the legs, kicks and bouncing, all just showing the happiness of being a women and me-that is the story☺*







# *Dance to Human*

*Professor: Judy Scalin*

*Fall 2002*

*Final*

*Rashanna Renee Dennis*



*When I started this class back on August 26, 2002, I already knew what Dance to Human meant; it simply means to live your life around dance. I figured this was the definition, because that's all I do. I dance at work, church, home and school, but because of the daily dancing, to dance to human meant more than that. In this essay, I will share a human experience of dance, which will define meaning "Dance to Human".*

*Dance is movement, the instrument of movement from the body, the spiritual body, physical body, emotional body and thinking body (dth/notes 2002). The spiritual body is the foundation from which movement you desire to explore from a spiritual barrier e.g. uplifting, crucifixion, resurrection of Jesus and Christmas. The physical body consists, of gravity and earth, allowing gravity to add power to gesture, allowing movement to go to its highest degree. This element heightens dance awareness of body-mind integration, which releases emotions. Emotion body gives expression with silence or sound. With expression, this tells the audience the tone of the movement e.g. smile-happy, tears-*



sadness and for hurt-pain. With expressions, it goes hand and hand with the thinking body. The thinking body, consist of choreography development, having the dancer put all of her elements all together. So therefore "the instrument of dance is the human body (Scalin). When we look at dance on a film we are actually watching a film not a dancer". But the story of the movement is to tell a story from movement which defines the true meaning of dance. But is that how you define dance to human? Dance is also defined as movement, with a series of movement, organized in such a way, that the use of energy or force in time and through space leads to literal or abstract expression (Laban, Rudolph). Dancing can be done alone or in a group. It can be performed for self or in front of an audience. So with the use of kinesphere, (energy, force and time), dance will make you explore the realm of culture and nature (Scalin).

❖ *Reflection of person*

❖ *Reflection of history of culture.*

- *Spanish*
- *African American*
- *Philippines*
- *Indian*
- *Hawaiian*



## ❖ *Culture Traditions*

## ❖ *Places of Healing*

- *Trees*
- *Beaches or river*
- *Lakeside shores*
- *Farms*

*With all being consider, dance becomes a journey, a journey that brings a better understanding of self and other ethnic cultures. So many people see dance as movements, generated from the body, but is it only movement?*

*I had the privilege to hear a young lady by the name of Lady Walquer speak on her views of dance, and she stated that "To dance is natural, to dance is supernatural". That the beginning of Life starts as a dot (\*), and this dot is black. And from this black dot, a beat starts called the heartbeat. And with this heartbeat, the body grows around it to a rhythm of the heartbeat. And with this rhythm of the heartbeat movement starts. From rhythm you have many things to consider such as blood pumping, muscle movement, breathing (inhale and exhale), eyes blinking and brain waves. These are all movement done on a natural basis, making*



life movement. Life is made of Rhythm, color, shape, sound and smells which makes humans move. The color red is a movement, because it draws you in or out e.g. red-light or stop sign. The shape of a heart, colored in red, shows passionate, making movement slow (making love). The sound of a drum draws you to movement from the loud beat. The loud beat comes from our feet (steppers)-then we try it with sticks and our hands, again this is originated naturally. So therefore rhythm is part of life, movement is an expression of that natural rhythm (Walquer). To move is natural. To dance is human is natural. Dance is organized movement for a purpose. It can be several reasons with several purposes. All movement is not dance but all dances involve movement (Walquer).



## *Exploring other dance groups*

*From exploring other dance movements in class, I have learned the importance of dance culture. With culture being the seed for classification of life, dance is used to tell culture without words. It gives a brief description of the past, present and future. Many people of different culture groups discover their culture dance for not the sake of their culture, but to let those who are closed minded to see, that they too exist. Dance culture, gives an invitation to people of other cultures to come and learn of a new culture.*

- ✓ Showing culture markers*
- ✓ Family rituals*
- ✓ Foods*
- ✓ Role of father and mother*
- ✓ Taboos*
- ✓ Culture clothing*



*This is what makes culture so meaning and significance. To be involved with culture, builds pride and dignity making you feel proud to be. With so many different cultures in the world today there lays similarities and differences among different cultures.*

### *Striking differences*

- \* Jewish culture - storyteller*
- \* Rolanda Reese- Hawaiian dances, with the upper body, then the lower body.*
- \* Dulce Capadocia- philipino choreography  
Taking in Filipino traditions, Filipino culture and Filipino spirit and overlapped it into contemporary American  
Aesthetic (modern, ballet, jazz, commercial)*

### *Similarities*

- \* African American- celebrates traditional holidays, Christmas, Easter, thanksgiving, birthdays, weddings and funerals.*
- \* Irish Caucasians- celebrate traditional holidays as, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, birthdays, weddings and funerals.*
- \* Europeans- traditional celebrations*

*All in dance, train with ballet for strength and explore to jazz, modern, hip-hop, tap and contemporary dance to strengthen dance education.*



... *First dance meant...*



*Now dance means a bundle of things... Dance is an expression of the human body in motion where the intention is to aspire to move beyond- more consciously than the pedestrian movement humans beings engage in everyday. Dance is a natural phenomena, it's supernatural from the birth of rhythm. We are all born with a rhythm waiting to be found, we search and find through dance.*



*Dance, tells the emotions of the heart, it sings thoughts and speaks of culture. Dance gives past, present and future of culture. It gives a lesson within itself (dth/2002). In order to do this, you use the body as an instrument to create dance. You start by using spiritual, physical, emotion and the thinking body, each allowing dance to be human to its highest degree. We climb to this highest degree from the elements of dance- time, force and space, taking on indirect space or direct space, moving into a vertical dimension or sagittal dimension (Laban Rudolph). Using free flow, or bound flow, being quick in time or slow in time. All of these elements makes dance un-predictable, you never know what you might see. Nor, you never know how it can make you feel.*



*Dance can be solitary experience of self-expression where the dancer dances to discover feelings and ideas, make thought and feeling and ideas, make thought and feeling connections, release tensions and in other ways become self-aware of individuality. In this way dance can be thought as a mediation, healing and culture reflection.*

*Dance is found throughout most cultures throughout most cultures throughout time although its role and style varies significantly. Studying the role of dance and dancing in a culture help understand the reasons of who, when, where of dance and the role of dancers (Scalin). As well the style and forms of the dance and will reveal a great deal about the culture and their life and values.*



# *The Future*

*When I become a dance teacher in the near future, I will take on the task to share too many students, the meaning of dance, and how dance can do so much. How to dance is a gift but not a privilege. To dance is a never ending journey that takes you too many different cultures, and uplifts the mind to learn unfamiliarity movements.*

*I will apply the elements of dance (time, force, space and energy) and show the different levels in which they can be used in dance. Also, to show how movement was born from the rhythm of the heartbeat, making movement supernatural. How rhythm, color, sound, smell, and shapes all have movement. Most importantly how everybody is dancing all the time and we don't even know it.*

*I appreciate this dance course (Dance to Human) for opening up my mind making me see outside the box, and to explore outside my culture boundaries. For exploring other cultures that I take something from it-which I did, for teaching the importance of listening and sharing the inner soul of fear. To dance is human is what makes me human, a human to dance is to make you dance, which ever one satisfies your being, allow that to bring joy, because my universe is to dance and with dance, it will resemble who I am as a human.*



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# Definitions

- \* *Inclusion and Exclusion*
  - *To invite, stretching a comfort zone*
- \* *Rituals and non-rituals*
  - *To share family traditions with others with no family traditions.*
- \* *Cross-cultural or inter-cultural*
  - *Having a connection between people who retain there own signature while engaging in dynamic communication with others. Example: school, church and work.*
- \* *Kinesthetic Intelligence- the body intelligence designated by Howard Gardner (frame of mind).*
- \* *Literal/non-literal- as it actually exists in the concrete world: as it is meant.*
- \* *Humanism/humanist- the study of the thoughts and feelings of the human journey; the study of the artifacts (writing, tools, dances, homes, etc) of human experiences.*
- \* *Who is at the table? Love, spirit, compassion, intelligence, values, traditions, ethnicity and race.*



# *Senior Thesis*

*Rashanna Dennis*

*Dance Major*

*Fall 2003*

*Assigned professor: Judy Alter*

## *Summery of Classes:*

### *Fundamentals Composition I and II.*

Fundamental I and II, is a class based on principles of composition of dance, in relation to time, force, space and kinesthesia. From the elements of Dance, it gave me an exploration of where the movement is taking place and what kind of shapes or shaping it involves e.g. axial, locomotor, direct, indirect, symmetry, asymmetry, far and close kinesphere and positive and negative space, also the use of movement in time e.g. tempo, beat, rhythm and the use of breath as time. Fundamental I and II share the elements of dance through the use of nature and material possessions, allowing me to dance like the wind and water, to feel like a bird and to dance like machine objects e.g. blow dryer, typewriter, vacuum, washer machine and microwave. From this exploration of choreography, opens the door for dance to be anything and everything.

### *Dance Styles and form.*

From taking the course dance styles and forms, it provide curriculum of exploring different styles of dance in culture and environment, allowing me to share dance indoors or outdoors through a sense of connectivity and the use of dance as a MOTIF. This class, consist of similar elements as fundamentals I and II, with the use of force, time, space, reminding us what dance will always consist of. It shared dance history of well profound choreographers such as, Martha graham, Doris Humphrey, Weidman, Denishawn and many others, showing a variety of different styles of dance-- and at the end of the term, I had the opportunity to share my style to the class which was Hip/Hop-southern jazz. In Exploration of dance composition of dance style forms, it provided the study of dance forms,



allowing me to see what my comfort zone is of dance and how to make it me. My aesthetic is hip/hop/jazz, it is me.

### Laban Movement Analysis

Laban movement Analysis allowed me to discover, different movements in different planes and dimensions from the study of Rudolf Laban's method of systematic description of change in motion and movement. This study consist of movement in a saggital plane, vertical plane or a horizontal plane, revealing movement with a defining motion. This study shared the elements of time: quick or sustained movement, force: weight, passive, bound or free flow and as in Fundamentals I and II, space: large or small kinesphere with indirect and direct space. Laban Movement Analysis, provided a easier way to know dance and what it is doing and its motion, allowing choreographers to use this element in choreographing a dance piece—I DO IT ALL THE TIME.

### Music for Dance

Music for dance is a class that just gave me a more significant reason to appreciate music. TO dance I must have a beat and tempo, without that, dance is not awake. During the class session of this class, whenever I began to play the drum, I was ready to dance. This class took me on an exploration of music in African Culture, allowing me to learn African Music by playing the drum—as well singing the lyrics. It brought wonderful energy for African culture and wonderful energy just to feel connected.

### To Dance is Human

To Dance is Human, is one class, I really appreciate enrolling in. It provided the real definition of dance and how dance originated. From this class, I left with the solid definition that dance is supernatural, and how life is a rhythm. Everybody is in a rhythm and the world is in a rhythm. From the air we breathe, from the sunrise to the sundown, from a earthquake to a tornado, everything



is in a rhythm, so if the world is in a rhythm, then that makes dance is to be human, so dance is the meaning of my life and being.

This class also, gave me the opportunity to share my culture traditions and close family rituals with fellow classmates through listening from others, also learning different experiences and how to accept all people and their culture. From this opportunity provided the experience of exploring different origins such as, Africa, Asia and Europe, Hawaii and United States, looking not only at culture but also the dance culture.

### *Dance History*

Dance History provides the study of dance development from medieval religious pageantry, the Renaissance, the birth of ballet in the classical period, the birth of Modern dance, profound choreographers who set the landmark for dance in United States, different styles of dance, political and social affairs of dance, race, class and gender issues of dance and how people overcame their struggles to dance. This was the only class that, considered hip/hop as a genre of dance (appreciated that). It provided dance history of diversity and, excluding a focus on one culture.

### *Dance Kinesiology I and II*

Dance kinesiology, was a class that took dance to health class, where from dancing, you can learn the proper necessities it takes to have a healthy body to dance--by all means, in order to dance you must be in a good shape to do so. Dance Kinesiology focused on the anatomy of the body, in dance movements and daily body functions. Exploring in the muscles of the body, organs of the body, anterior and posterior muscles, the cells of the body, the bones of the body, health and nutrition tips of the entire body e.g. healthy diet, vitamins and nutrients, healing for sickness, food preparations, organic foods vs. non-organics and how to read food labels. This class, has made me more aware of what goes in the body and what comes out of the body. As dancers, it is important to take time to know what the body is capable of---



Evaluating weaknesses and strengths of ones body. When dancing, it is important to know how to recover from an injury e.g. if one sprains their ankle, it is good to know, what muscles and bones, that may be injured. Plus, to receive the proper rehabilitation for specific muscles----because not all doctors are doctors.

### Pilates

Pilates, is a class that helped me stay in shape, work off excess fat, and strengthen my core. Pilates, is a series of routine exercises which helps strengthen the body from the use of the power house. The power house consist of the adominals, lower back, diaphragm and pelvic floor. From the power house being use in many exercises, it helps builds ones capacity for strength of the entire body. This allowed me to build my strength in my legs and upper body, which I am very weak in due to low iron and calcium. This class also teaches how to initiate movements with the use of breathing--from breathing movements flow very easy. I now use this for choreography.

### Principle of Teaching Dance

This class made the most sense for me, why? Principles of teaching, provided the number one reason any teacher should teach, and that's to make teaching meaningful. When Judy Altar told the class that, I knew, my job as a future teacher had a meaning and purpose. To teach, one must take the proper procedures in order to carry out ones duty. In order to teach and make it meaningful, one must first, draw up lesson plans, choreograph routines, learn how to teach the material or routine, allow students to explore in every lesson plan and most important, make sure the students are receiving what you are teaching. This class has taught me how to do this, I am now ready to teach and make it meaningful, because I now have the principles of what it takes to teach and how to establish it's purpose.

### Movement Arts for Children

Movement arts for children, was a class, that also deals with lesson planning, and providing proper time for instruction and activity. This class share the



importance for children to receive physical activity everyday in school, and the right type of activity they receive. In today's society Physical Education is sometimes over looked where students may sit in a class all day, and receive no physical activity. This class provided many different types of exercises children can do in or out of a class. It provided activity and instructional managements guidelines in teaching physical activity, allowing the teacher to stay focus on the importance of movement and less instruction (talking). From taking this class, I had the chance to go into the field and teach P.E. to elementary students, to learn what and how to teach a P.E. class. That was a fun assignment. In overall evaluation of this class, I left the class knowing the importance of activity time to students.

### Techniques

**Ballet:** Ballet has only shared the meaning of posture and alignment; shoulders down, turnout, chest lifted and point your toes. From learning this, I have applied this in my field with my students and with myself. When dancing, having this alignment allows the dance movement to be seen more clearly, and that's an accomplishment.

**Jazz:** Jazz has shared the meaning of doing what it takes to perform. In my class sessions Loretta will always say, "If you were performing right now what will you do?" By saying made me feel a sense of comfort in performing and discipline. Because if your on stage and you had to go to the restroom, or try to fix your hair while dancing, or any thing that's a distraction or conflict, you hath to always remember to perform. Presentation is the entertainment. I really enjoy all the movements taught by Loretta, but during the semester, when learning certain movements she fail to teach execution from a perarete into placement, that was very frustrating for me throughout the course, even after I made her aware of it, but besides that, I appreciate the class and have applied it to my field work.

**Modern:** Modern has shared the meaning of dance to be "whatever", whereas the movements consist of circular, pedestrian, acrobatic, gymnastics, anything. From taking the class, I feel it was a new



experience for me, allowing me to see and learn a new type of dance, but I do not prefer this style, but do appreciate the experience.



# *Thank You*

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*Thank you with love,*

*Rashanna Renee Dennis*



